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ABSTRACT

As the largest provider of MBA talent in the Western United States, the Graziadio School of Business and Management (Malibu, California) had a need to create a technology infrastructure to support students and staff distributed in seven educational centers throughout California. This paper describes the process by which the School came to recognize the potential for portal technology to foster communication, improve the quality of service, and enhance the learning and administrative environment. It also describes how the authors adapted and deployed real-world corporate portal technology to enhance executive and management education through e-learning. The School's process for adapting portal technology for e-learning and knowledge management to create a collaborative learning and working environment has implications and should be of interest to those in higher education and corporate/management training. (Author)

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Adapting Corporate Portal Technology for Management E-Learning

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Abstract As the largest provider of MBA talent in the Western United States the Graziadio School of Business and Management had a need to create a technology infrastructure to support students and staff distributed in 7 educational centers throughout California. This paper will describe the process by which the School came to recognize the potential for portal technology to foster communication, improve the quality of service, and enhance the learning experience and will explain how we created a vision for a new collaborative learning and administrative environment. It will also describe how we adapted and deployed real-world corporate portal technology to enhance executive and management education through E-Learning. The School's process for adapting portal technology for E-Learning and knowledge management to create a collaborative learning and working environment has implications and should be of interest to those in higher education and corporate/management training.

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Physical Environment: Distributed Students and Faculty

As the largest provider of MBA talent in the Western United States the Graziadio School of Business and Management had a need to create a technology infrastructure to support its 2000+ students and staff distributed in 7 educational centers throughout California. With only a small full-time program at our Malibu campus, the majority of students were working adults attending night-time classes at one of our seven educational centers in Southern and Northern California. Students would often identify with a center or a program but often felt disassociated from the Graziadio School. Faculty were distributed as well often teaching at 3 different educational centers.

Administrative Environment

As is often the case, the School administration saw a general need for an improved information technology infrastructure to tie together students, staff and faculty. There was a general feeling that information technology could be useful to:

- Extend the reach and scope of the Graziadio School business model
- Prepare students to be effective professionals in a knowledge economy
- Use technology to enable the School to "run like a business."

However, the School did not have a large information technology staff nor much experience in technology use or planning. School administration turned to an outside consultant, PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to guide the development of a technology action plan. PwC helped the School form a Steering Committee and create a process to develop a technology plan to better define the School's technology goals. PwC along with the Steering Committee developed a technology planning Roadmap to guide the design of a new information technology infrastructure for the School.

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IT Vision	IT Infrastructure	IT Action Plan
Create a vision for School information technology	Assess existing IT infrastructure including Hardware, systems, software, and networks	Develop recommendations and define initiatives
Agree on guiding principles that will be used to prioritize investments	Integrate best practices	Develop rationale
Identify role for technology and the School's technology goals	Analyze gap between current and desired state Design future IT infrastructure model that will allow for future growth Develop cost estimates for hardware, software, maintenance, and implementation	Develop implementation plan

IT RoadMap

Once the Steering Committee had the RoadMap it could proceed to focus the School's technology goals. The Steering Committee first developed a vision for information technology in management education that was driven by the following premises:

> In the future, management education could be divided into two types of educational providers:
>
> 1. Mass produced, automated, online learning. This learning will be convenient and low-cost. It will be offered to a large number of people.
> 2. Premium quality, personalized learning. This type of learning will be "high-touch." It will also be high-tech, full-service, time-efficient, and relatively high-cost. Small classes and a low student-faculty ratio will enable personalized education.
>
> Straddling these two types will be difficult and dangerous. Pepperdine aspires to be in the second category and must develop a technical infrastructure to maintain -- and enhance -- the quality of its education.

Vision

Built as it was on small classes and individualized attention to student needs, the School was interested in creating a vision that supported its student-centered orientation. The following technology vision was developed based on the School's emphasis on responsiveness to students needs and a desire to improve service and communication.

> The Graziadio School values personal interaction. The School also recognizes the potential for technology to foster communication, improve the quality of service, and enhance the learning experience. Technology should not be embraced for its own sake; technology usage should support the institution's mission and strategic goals.

Desired Benefits

A technology vision is still on a general level so the committee proceeded to focus in on desired goals and objectives to help drive the development of a new information infrastructure. The next step involved the definition of guiding principles and objectives for a successful system implementation. Always mindful that the new system sould be supportive of the school's mission and business goals the committee determined that a system should accomplish the following objectives:

- eliminate redundancy and create synergies between the School and the University

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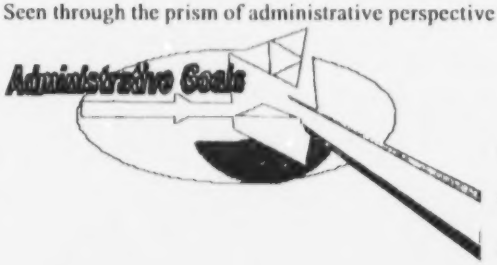
- enable the School to operate more "like a business" through the application of technology that enables increased customer service and the cost-effective administration of the School.
- expand learning and teaching opportunities and effectiveness
- foster a learning environment that is current and relevant to today's business community

Along with these objectives,the committee established some general priniciples to guide the development of the new system:

- User-friendly solutions – Technology solutions must be user-friendly and rapidly adopted by students and faculty.
- Avoid "bleeding edge" technology -- Although exciting, new technologies are often costly and unreliable. Moreover, supporting new technologies is challenging, particularly given the unique characteristics of GSBM end-users.
- Immediate implementation -- The School is eager to make progress on its technology infrastructure and wants to begin the next phase of this project immediately
- Affordable -- The School has limited resources and must find cost-effective solutions

Administrative Perspective

Seen through the prism of administrative perspective the goals for the system were:

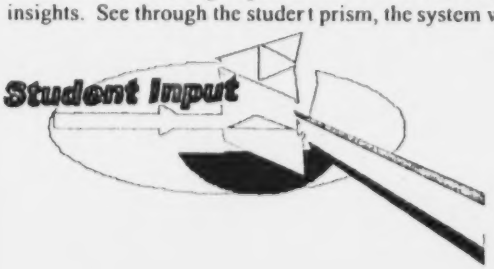


- Extend the reach and scope of the Graziadio School business model,
- Prepare students to be effective professionals in a knowledge economy
- Use technology to enable the School to "run like a business."
- Supportive of the institution's mission and business goals

Needs Analysis

PwC and the School, aware that there any successful system implementation is dependent on user acceptance strove to uncover the needs and perspectives of the potential users of the system. An extensive schedule of interviews, focus groups and surveys was outlined and all major stakeholder groups were consulted to determine how a new technology infrastructure should support the work of the various groups.

Interviews and focus groups conducted with students were quite enlightening and uncovered some interesting insights. See through the student prism, the system would need to address the following:



- Existing technology does not support the learning experience
- Personal service but increased electronic access to information and better access to technology tools.
- Strengthen ability to communicate and collaborate

Faculty of course had a different set of perceptions about technology. Because many faculty did not have a lot of experience with technology the committee set out to get a general feeling for what the faculty valued

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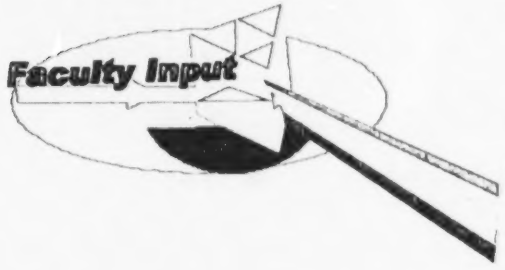
about the teaching and learning environment at Pepperdine. The faculty felt that any new technology should support the traditional strengths of the Graziadio teaching program including these core values:

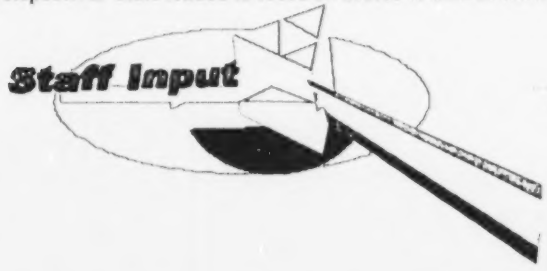
- The freedom and ability to create and re-formulate classes as the situation and opportunity dictates
- Real-world orientation of teaching
- Continued face-to-face contact and small classes.
- Personal contact with students and availability of individualized attention

Seen through the perspective of the faculty the system would support the following



- Support team process and increase collaboration outside class.
- Improve connectivity of students to course-related material, to instructors and other students and provide access to an expanded resource base.
- Provide access to systems that are similar to those used in "real world" businesses.

Polling students and faculty was enlightening and helped focus development of the new system.
It became clear that what started out as a desire to improve information technology generally had expanded to become a system that supported teaching, administrative and collaborative activities. Each set of needs can be pictured as being reflected through a different prism Interviews with staff produced yet a different perspective. Staff tended to focus on access to data as shown by the following



- Administrative support is highly dependent on University level services, policies, systems and resources.
- Staff are hindered by manual processes, distributed database development, distributed maintenance, and inadequate storage procedures Data are dispersed among multiple data

Proceeding from the general business process goals defined by the administration further analysis by PwC and the Steering Committee determined that the desired system would have to be very flexible and extensible. A final reduction of the various stakeholders' perspectives produced the following list of objectives the system would have to meet:

- Alignment of technology with business goals
- Access to integrated information
- Ability to communicate, collaborate, and work from any location
- Access to and proficiency in technology tools
- Ability for administration to provide cost-effective, high-quality service

Solution: Corporate Portal Technology

The School looked at a number of different platforms for learning including WebCt, Campus Pipeline and StudyNet as well as communications platforms like FirstClass. Eventually if became clear that none of these platforms could support a majority of needs. One criteria that had climbed to the top of the needs analysis was that the system should allow students to receive hands-on experience with a system that is actually used in corporate America. There was a real desire on the part of faculty and administration that the system be a

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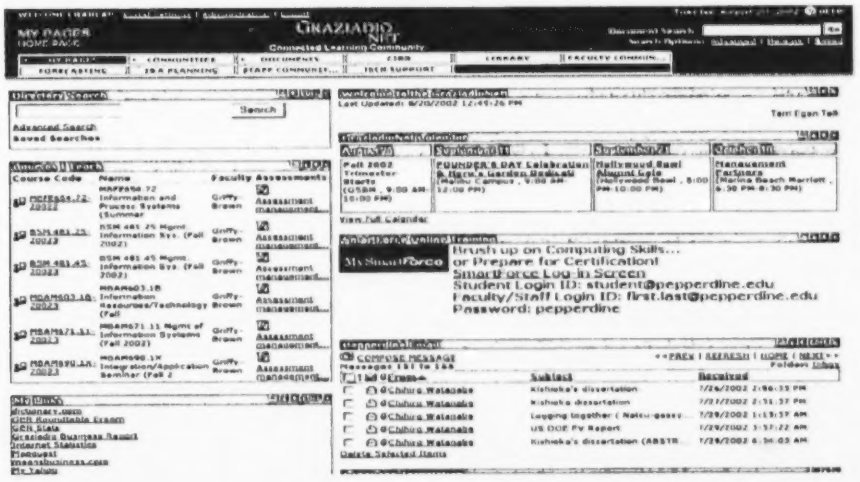
business-world technology in keeping with the GraziadioSchool's focus on real-world business applications, Eventually we received three responses, one from Oracle, one from Microsoft Consulting Services and one from a systems integration company, Spectria who proposed to link a corporate portal product from Plumtree Software with a collaborational piece called eRoom.

A corporate portal brings together under a standard web-based interface content, applications and services from incompatible platforms, for students, faculty and staff. It is a single point of access to:

- Enterprise applications
- Documents and Web pages
- Internet services
- Collaboration Tools

GraziadioNet Portal Implementation

The GraziadioNet is an implementation of corporate portal technology designed to meet the needs of students, staff and faculty in the areas of education, administration and support.



GraziadioNet Portal "Homepage"

Portals Fill Multiple Needs

From the School's extensive needs analysis it was clear that we needed a flexible tool that could handle:

- Knowledge management and access to multiple sources of information
- Links to eLearning and class content
- Class administration
- Consolidation of multiple information tools such as e-mail and calendars

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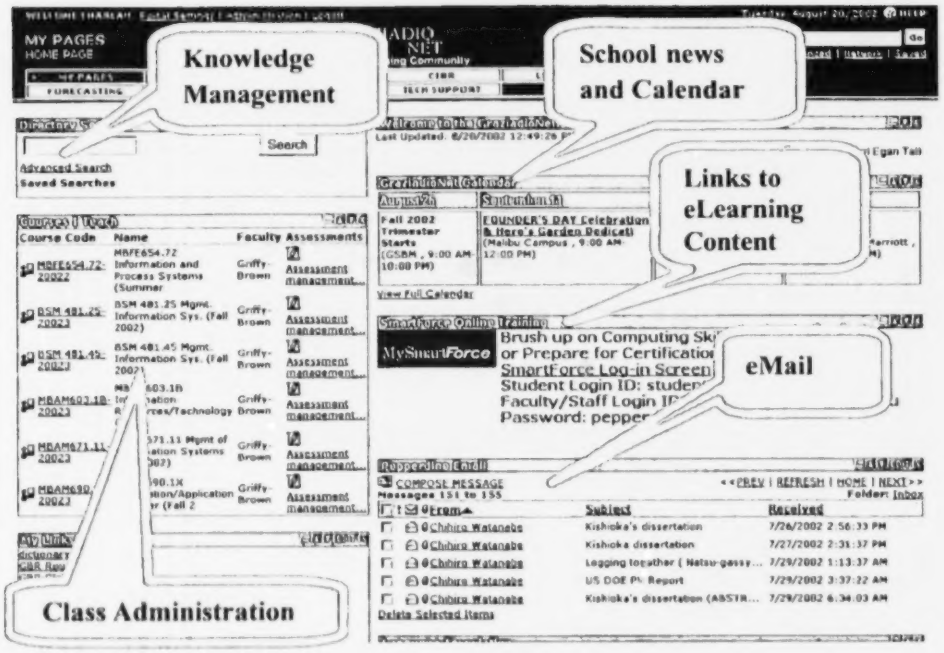

Fulfilling Many Functional Needs

Seen through the prisms of the various user groups the system requirements became quite extensive. It should be remembered that a high premium was placed on any system that was a real-world corporate solution, could help students better identify with the School, could consolidate multiple information sources and help students, faculty and staff collaborate. As well, faculty were strongly desirous of a system that could support student team projects and increase connectivity among students and faculty. The corporate portal platform which allowed linkages to collaboration software proved to be a real-world corporate tool that could meet administrative needs to automate more of the school's business functions and still serve as a learning platform for students.

Multiple Information Sources

The GraziadioNet Business Education Portal as it came to be called recognizes users as students, staff or faculty and takes them to an individualized portal home page upon logging in. The web-based system can be accessed from any computer linked to the Internet. The individualized home page contains information resources called "gadgets" that allow access to multiple forms of information. Two of the more useful gadgets are the Library and Course eRoom gadgets. The Library gadget provides single-login linkage to a number of business databases such as Lexis-Nexus and Dow Jones Interactive.

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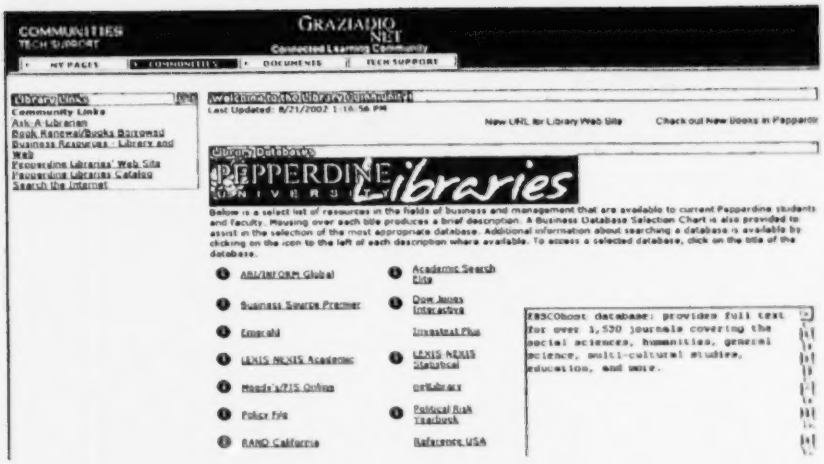
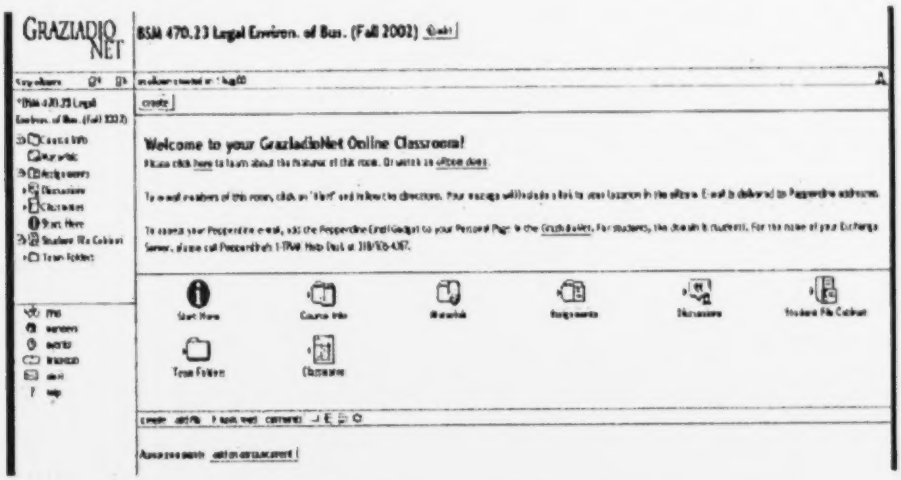

COMMUNITIES
TECH SUPPORT
GRAZIADIO NET
Connected Learning Community
MY PAGES
COMMUNITIES
DOCUMENTS
TECH SUPPORT
Library Links
Community Links
Ask A Librarian
Book Renewal/Books Borrowed
Business Resources - Library and Web
Pepperdine Libraries' Web Site
Pepperdine Libraries Catalog
Search the Internet
Welcome to the Library Information Page
Last Updated: 8/21/2002 1:16:56 PM
New URL for Library Web Site
Check out New Books in Pepperdine
Library Databases
PEPPERDINE Libraries
UNIVERSITY
Below is a select list of resources in the fields of business and management that are available to current Pepperdine students and faculty. Hovering over each title produces a brief description. A Business Database Selection Chart is also provided to assist in the selection of the most appropriate database. Additional information about searching a database is available by clicking on the icon to the left of each description where available. To access a selected database, click on the title of the database.
ABI/INFORM Global
Academic Search Elite
Business Source Premier
Dow Jones Interactive
Emerald
Investext Plus
LEXIS NEXIS Academic
LEXIS NEXIS Statistical
Mergent/FIS Online
netLibrary
Policy File
Political Risk Yearbook
RAND California
Reference USA
EBSCOhost database: provides full text for over 1,520 journals covering the social sciences, humanities, general science, multi-cultural studies, education, and more.

Links to Library Business Databases"

The eRoom Course gadget provides links for faculty and students to any workspaces for any courses they teach or for which they are registered. Course eRooms have extensive collaborational support and help faculty manage course materials. Students can access course materials and information from anywhere they can login.



Links to Online Class Workspaces

Other information resources include a searchable document directory and a link to online eTraining materials from SmartForce.

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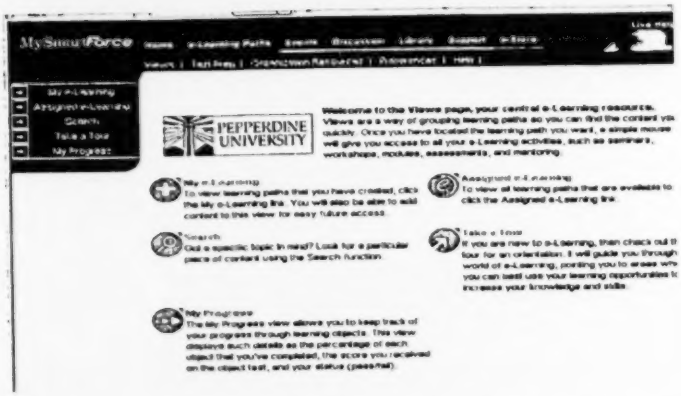
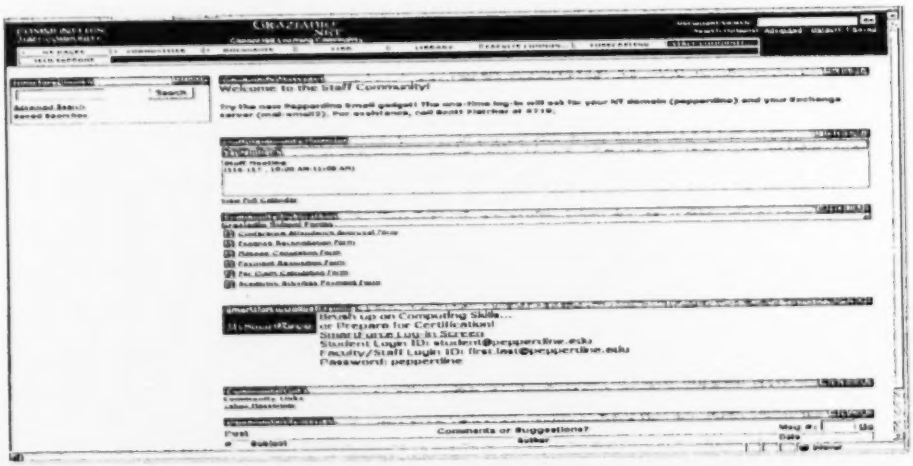


The GraziadioNet provides extensive support for collaboration through both community features in the portal such as the Staff Community shown below.



Finally, the GraziadioNet through programming extensibility of the gadget structure allows for automation of administrative tasks such as class scheduling allowing the School to run more efficiently and cut down on manual operations

Course	Name	Malibu (MA)	Plaza (PP)	San Fernando Valley (SF)	Orange County (OC)	Long Beach (LB)	Ventura County Center (VC)
BSM469	Organizational Behavior	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0	students 42 forecast 2 adjusted 2	students 20 forecast 1 adjusted 1	students 34 forecast 1 adjusted 1	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0
BSM469	Managerial Economics	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0	students 36 forecast 1 adjusted 1	students 20 forecast 1 adjusted 1	students 28 forecast 1 adjusted 1	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0
BSM470	Legal Environment of Business	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0	students 38 forecast 2 adjusted 2	students 33 forecast 1 adjusted 1	students 24 forecast 1 adjusted 1	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0
BSM471	Statistical Methods/Research Design	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0	students 18 forecast 1 adjusted 1	students 4 forecast 0 adjusted 0	students 19 forecast 1 adjusted 1	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0
BSM472	Accounting	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0	students 43 forecast 2 adjusted 2	students 14 forecast 1 adjusted 1	students 40 forecast 2 adjusted 2	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0
BSM473	Marketing	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0	students 27 forecast 1 adjusted 1	students 30 forecast 1 adjusted 1	students 33 forecast 1 adjusted 1	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0
BSM474	Managerial Finance	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0	students 23 forecast 1 adjusted 1	students 8 forecast 0 adjusted 0	students 25 forecast 1 adjusted 1	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0
BSM475	Production/Operations Management	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0	students 21 forecast 1 adjusted 1	students 2 forecast 0 adjusted 0	students 25 forecast 1 adjusted 1	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0	students - forecast 0 adjusted 0

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